



TITLE:

# Establishment of the Han Empire

AUTHOR(S):

Matsushima, Tatsuma

---

CITATION:

Matsushima, Tatsuma. Establishment of the Han Empire. 2018: 1-8

ISSUE DATE:

2018

URL:

<http://hdl.handle.net/2433/230699>

RIGHT:

## English Abstract

## Establishment of the Han Empire

## Introduction: “Formation of a Unified State”

In this chapter, I begin with an overview of trends in the political history of the early Western Han period since the beginning of the twenty-first century. While recent research trends have been influenced by excavated textual materials such as the *Ernian lüling*, a Han bamboo text excavated from *Zhangjianshan*, the role of the Liu Bang group in the process of state formation has concurrently attracted considerable attention. In addition, the political history of the early Western Han period is explained as the process of the decline of the Liu Bang group. Further, the active aspects of the *Junguo* system (Commandery and Principality System) are now evaluated from a perspective that does not regard “unity” as self-evident. However, as it has been used in recent studies, exactly what is meant by the term “Liu Bang group” is somewhat ambiguous. In addition, when we consider the history of the terms “Liu Bang group” and “*Junguo* system,” both are terminologies that appeared as two sides of the same coin in the context of post-World War II Japanese academic community, which originally took the presumption of “unity” as an initial premise. Moreover, the “Liu Bang group” theory also came to be seen as a factor in the motivating force behind the formation of the centralized system of authority—i.e., de facto “unity”—that was established up to the time of Emperor Wu in the middle Western Han period, resulting in an emphasis on intrinsic factors and a tendency to overlook relationships with the Xingnu and other forces outside China proper. In this book, in light of these issues, I discuss the formation of a unified state in China.

## Chapter 1 : Establishment of the Han Dynasty: The Path of *Gaozu Liu Bang* and His Retainers

In this chapter, by tracing the path of *Gaozu Liu Bang* and his retainers, I clarify the establishment process of the Han Dynasty as a part of *Tianxia* (“under the heaven”) and *Zhōngguó* (China proper). Until now, the fact that it has been regarded as self-evident that Han was a unified state and that it was moreover a developed expression of the Liu Bang group has meant that, in the process of Liu Bang becoming the Emperor *Gaozu*, the period of transition in which this group of robbers were transformed into a state has not been given adequate discussion. Based on the awareness of this problem and taking hints from the *Jue* (rank) seized by his retainers, in this chapter, I discuss the change in the relationship between Liu Bang and his followers to clarify the importance of the support given by Xiang Yu to the King of Han and the fact that this relationship was not renewed even after Liu Bang’s accession as Emperor. The Han Dynasty mentioned in the chapter title was a kingdom set up as one of Xiang Yu’s Eighteen Kingdoms, and despite that fact that it later subordinated the others to secure its rule of China, its essential nature remained unchanged. On the other hand, while the Han Dynasty embarked on a program of national governance through the full exercise of personal networks following the accession of Liu Bang as Emperor *Gaozu*, this too was premised on the existence of the Han Dynasty and feudal kingdoms as separate entities.

## Chapter 2 : From Chen She to Liu Bang: The Late Qin and Chu Han International Order and the Principle of Legitimacy

Here, I track the process leading from uprisings by Chen She to the beginning of support for feudal kings with same surname and a variety of discourses that were current in this period. The results of this effort clarify the importance of a

mechanism of mutual recognition as a principle enabling rival chieftains to identify oneself as a king, and the existence of a framework of coexisting states after the warring states period. The problem of Xiang Yu's support of the Eighteen Kingdoms, which touched off the Chu-Han War, is also attributable to these circumstances. Furthermore, Liu Bang's ultimate victory was secured by resolving problems arising from the support of the Eighteen Kingdoms. The establishment of the Han Dynasty and Liu Bang's accession as Emperor are both phenomena that emerged from an international environmental context.

The matters discussed to this point have basically taken place prior to the full-scale appearance of the Xingnu in China proper. So how did the primitive form of the Regime of West Han, which consisted, as portrayed here, of the Han Dynasty and the feudal kingdoms, transform after 200 BCE?

### Chapter 3 : Rethinking the *Junguo* System (Commandery and Principality System): The Early Western Han Constitution

Here, focusing on the relationship between the Han Dynasty and the feudal kingdoms, an institutional consideration of the autonomy of the feudal kingdoms and the aspects in which they were integral with the Han Dynasty is carried out. The autonomy of the feudal kingdoms existed not only in terms of personnel and finances, but also in terms of *lǐlǐng* (legal codes) and their operation, as well as *Jue*. On the other hand, as a measure to secure the integrity of the Han Dynasty with the feudal kingdoms, and its supremacy over them (either way presupposing a certain amount of autonomy on the part of the feudal kingdoms), I discuss the sharing of various institutions, including the Temples of Junguo (Temples of commandery and principality). In addition, by working out the geographic range of concepts such as *Tianxia* and China proper as they appear in contemporary discourses, I reconstruct the Chinese world-view as it

existed in the early Western Han period. What emerges from this is the fact that while the Regime of West Han, which consisted of the Han Dynasty and the feudal kingdoms, should certainly be seen as a collection of individual states, from an external perspective, a certain extent of cohesion was undoubtedly present.

#### Chapter 4 : A True Picture of the Lu Family's Domination: National Rule by the Regime of West Han and Its Repercussions

Here, I consider the structure of governance in the Xiaohui and Gaohou periods with reference to the dominance by the Lu family. While dominance by the Lu family has heretofore been described as a relationship between the individual character of Empress Lu herself and *Gaozu's* retainers, the contemporary relationship that existed between the Han Dynasty and the feudal kingdoms has not received sufficient consideration. While this chapter seeks to reconstitute a true picture of the Lu family's dominance, including the heretofore overlooked treatment of the extended Lu Family, the factors behind the establishment of this dominance also included the modalities of national rule by the full exercise of personal networks and the contemporary policy challenges faced by the Regime of West Han.

#### Chapter 5 : The Advent of Emperor Wen: Retainers and Feudal Kings in the Political Situation of the First Year of the Xiaowen Period

Here, I clarify the aspects of the political situation in which Emperor Wen came to power. As a topic, the reign of Emperor Wen has been marked by an emphasis on conflict with the *Gaozu* retainers and the problems of the feudal kings and the Xingnu. On the other hand, while the ousting of the *Gaozu* retainers has enjoyed exclusive attention in the treatment of the political

situation in the immediate wake of the Emperor's accession, in such cases, the relationship with the feudal kings tends to fade into the background. In this chapter, I attempt to elucidate the process by which Emperor Wen's authority was established through a careful investigation of the political situation immediately following his accession so as to sketch a portrait of Emperor Wen in the context of the coexistence of the Han Dynasty and the feudal kingdoms.

## Chapter 6 : A Reconsideration of *Jiayi's* Argument on Xingnu: An Account of Reforms to the Northern Defense under the Reign of Emperor Wen

Here, I undertake a reconsideration of the strategy against the Xingnu proposed by *Jiayi* known as "*san biao wu er* (three personas and five feeds)" at the time of Emperor Wen. Within this strategy, the "five feeds" in particular have thus far been understood as an economic and cultural strategy against the Xingnu, and have been described as crude by some, and conversely, as having shown considerable foresight by others, with an overall emphasis on the *Jiayi's* individual thought. In this chapter, by analyzing *Jiayi's* argument on a textual level, I reveal that this argument regarding the Xingnu was in fact reflective of the contemporary discourse of the defense strategy against the Xingnu. To this context were added the changes to the nature of the Regime of West Han composed of the Han Dynasty and the feudal kingdoms. Although there were further inflections to *Jiayi's* arguments, these, too, were not completely unrelated to contemporary foreign policy challenges.

*Chapter 7 : Between the Huainan Question and “Dizhi” (1): JiaYi’s Policies of Feudal Kings “Partition of States” and the Concept of the Unification of “Under the Heaven”*

Here, as one of the strategies proposed by *Jiayi* for dealing with the feudal kings, I analyze the “Partition of States” in an isolated and chronological manner. I clarify that the origin of *Jiayi*’s awareness of the problem was the treatment of King Li of Huainan, Liu Zhan, who had lost his standing in a suspicion of conspiracy against the Emperor, and his orphans, and that *Jiayi*’s arguments advised that Emperor Wen institute a system of *dizhi* that would maintain the geographical framework that had existed since the time of Emperor *Gaozu*. While *Jiayi*’s discourse is said to have wavered between these two points, at the same time, an orientation also existed toward the unification of “*Tianxia*” as a means of attempting to assimilate them both.

*Chapter 8 : Between the Huainan Question and “Dizhi” (2): JiaYi’s Policies of Feudal Kings “Reinforcement of States of Near Relation” and the Reorganization of the Feudal Kingdoms*

Here, I examine the significance of the “Reinforcement of States of Near Relation” proposed by *Jiayi* as another strategy for dealing with the feudal kings, which requested the expansion of the kingdoms of the princes of Emperor Wen, as well as the differences from the reorganization of the feudal kingdoms that was attempted in practice. *Jiayi*’s proposed policy was premised on problems relating to the framework of kingdoms that had existed since the time of the Chu-Han War and the reforms to northern defenses that had come to the fore during this period. On the other hand, *Jiayi*’s discourse was also subject to the influence of the Huainan question that lay at the core of his own awareness of the problem. I clarify that this gave rise to a gap with actual policy.

## Chapter 9 : The Road to the Rebellion of the Seven States of Wu Ch'u and Others: The Fate of the Han Dynasty and the Feudal Kingdoms

Here, I weigh the merits of the conventional causal theories regarding the course of events that led to the outbreak of the Rebellion of the Seven States of Wu Ch'u, and others that triggered the shift from a situation of coexistence by the Han Dynasty and the feudal kingdoms to one of overwhelming supremacy on the part of the Han Dynasty. While we should acknowledge the act of supporting the feudal kings itself as a direct cause of the rebellion, in this chapter, I subject this process to closer analysis to point out the underlying fundamental causes of the rebellion. Namely, this is the fact that it reflected a fundamental weakness in the Regime of West Han composed of the Han Dynasty and feudal kingdoms.

## Conclusion : The Establishment of the Han Empire and the *Junxian* System (County Prefecture System)

Here, I confirm the points discussed in this study while tracing the situation of the southern kingdoms of East Yue and South Yue from the time of the founding of the Han Dynasty. In doing so, I clarify that the various systems by which the Regime of West Han was established as a parallel regime served in fact to exclude the southern kingdoms from what was considered as *Tianxia* and China proper. However, the southern situation shifted with the decline of South Yue, which gave Western Han a free hand to move forward with its war against the Xingnu. While a regime of centralized authority was established during this period, this was the *de facto* establishment of a unified state. However, the Han never abolished the *de jure* existence of the feudal kingdoms. In this chapter, I discuss the establishment of the Han Empire as a unified state by examining part of the background of the above from the political situation during the reign



#### Establishment of the Han Empire

of Emperor Wu, namely the fact that it was premised on the framework formed within the preceding coexistence of the Han Dynasty and feudal kingdoms. Then, while summarizing the content of the preceding chapters, I suggest the existence of new connections in the context of the de facto *Junxian* System as prospects for future consideration.